

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Jennie Wildsmith-Garton  
Headteacher  
Holly Meadows School  
Vong Lane  
Pott Row  
King's Lynn  
PE32 1BW

Dear Mrs Wildsmith-Garton

### **Short inspection of Holly Meadows School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

The newly formed senior leadership team gives the school strong direction. Leaders have built momentum in driving improvement, especially in mathematics. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have all been addressed. The presentation of pupils' work is consistently neat, with well-formed handwriting. Teachers share best practice both within the school and between schools.

Children get off to a flying start in the early years because staff really understand the needs of young children. They make the early years curriculum exciting and stimulating. The outdoor area, influenced by visits to see best practice in Scandinavia, provides excellent opportunities for children to learn and explore. Children enjoyed playing with a myriad of miniature coloured spheres in water, saying, 'They're really slippery!' High-quality resources enable children to extend their imaginative play, such as building a train out of crates.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. There is a happy but purposeful atmosphere. As a result, attendance is above average. Pupils behave very well and show courtesy to one another and to adults. The values of 'respect, reflection, responsibility, collaboration, creativity and curiosity' are visible in pupils' engagement throughout the school. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to take responsibility, including as 'learning leaders' who comment on the curriculum and make suggestions for how

learning could be even better.

Leaders' understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop is accurate and drawn from rigorous monitoring and high expectations. Teachers are supported well in improving their practice and learning from one another. Phonics is well taught, meaning that pupils learn how to read quickly. They develop higher-order reading skills as they move through the school, and an enjoyment of books and different authors.

Staff are skilled at supporting the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and tailoring the curriculum to meet their needs. Most of the pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points and grow in confidence. They are able to participate fully in the life of the school.

Parents commented on how pleased they were with their children's progress. One said, 'My daughter loves coming to school and feels well supported in her learning and in her development as a young person.' Another commented, 'I feel the school offers a wide range of opportunities and my children have built confidence through these.'

While the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average, they achieve well, usually attaining as well as their peers. Some of these disadvantaged pupils are also pupils with SEND. The school's caring ethos ensures that vulnerable pupils thrive. All pupils are treated as individuals and made to feel special.

Excellent use is made of the school's extensive grounds, with trained forest school teachers giving pupils exciting experiences of the outdoors in activities such as fire making, den building and rope swinging.

Governors know the school well and provide a good level of support. They are linked to key improvement priorities so that they can monitor the school's progress. Governors have challenged leaders over standards in mathematics. There have been recent changes to the governing body, so some are inexperienced. The governing body has not undertaken any evaluation of its own work in recent years in order to find ways that it can become even more effective.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have established a culture where pupils feel safe. Staff are particularly effective in promoting pupils' well-being and mental health through trained counsellors and online resources. Records are carefully completed of any concerns and always followed up. Leaders are tenacious when working with other agencies, to ensure that pupils receive the support they require in a timely way. All staff receive up-to-date training in safeguarding and know what to do should they have any concerns. Additionally, staff have received training about preventing radicalisation and extremism, and about female genital mutilation and county lines.

Pupils say they feel safe in and around the school and their parents agree with

them. The school has taken appropriate measures to ensure that the start and end of the school days are safe for pupils from traffic in the narrow farm lane outside.

## **Inspection findings**

- In order to make sure the school remains good, I identified a number of key lines of enquiry that we agreed at our initial meeting. First of all, I considered how successful leaders and governors have been at raising attainment in mathematics. In 2017 and 2018, the attainment of pupils in mathematics was low by the end of key stage 2.
- In response to low standards, leaders invested in an online assessment tool that identified gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics. The insight afforded by this tool enabled teachers to pinpoint more precisely where support was needed. In addition, the school introduced active sessions in mathematics, where pupils solved real-life problems in a dynamic setting. This brought the subject to life and gave pupils the tools they needed to strengthen their problem-solving and reasoning powers. Leaders implemented an eight-week plan for parental engagement that involved parents and their children working together at home to apply mathematical skills, for example in baking.
- As a result of these measures, pupils have grown in confidence and are more positive about mathematics. Progress has strengthened across the school, and standards in mathematics rose significantly in national tests at Year 2 and Year 6 in 2019, both at the expected and higher standards.
- Next, I considered what leaders and governors are doing to ensure that the curriculum is rich and varied and that it enables pupils to apply their skills in meaningful ways. There was little detail about how the wider curriculum is taught on the website.
- Considerable planning has gone into a rich, broad and balanced curriculum that takes into account pupils' interests and aspirations. Through whole-school projects, teachers adapt the curriculum for their classes. A rolling programme ensures that pupils in mixed-age classes do not repeat work. The school excels in drama and the performing arts. These enhance the curriculum and provide pupils with memorable experiences. For example, all pupils came together to put on a production commemorating the centenary of the end of the First World War, which was of a high standard and showed great sensitivity to the conditions endured by soldiers in the trenches and families back home.
- This term the 'journeys' topic has led to imaginative and interesting work about countries around the world and the plight of refugees. The curriculum uses methods that promote thinking and life skills that develop pupils' questioning skills and heighten their curiosity. These approaches equip pupils well for life in modern Britain and for becoming lifelong learners.
- Pupils' recorded work across the curriculum does not fully reflect the breadth and depth of their knowledge and understanding. While pupils could talk confidently about what they remembered from their learning, this was not necessarily evident in high-quality extended writing or in-depth research in their books. On occasions, pupils complete undemanding worksheets or cut and stick printed

pieces of writing, when they are more than capable of writing for themselves.

- Finally, we considered how the school is promoting pupils' awareness of other cultures. The school is overwhelmingly White British. There was an area to improve at the previous inspection about understanding pupils' different backgrounds.
- Pupils' cultural capital is developed through the school's values, such as 'respect' and its curriculum. Pupils find out about different cultures and traditions from visitors and visits, including those from different faith communities. Pupils spend extended periods of time with pupils from other backgrounds, on residential visits and through sports and arts events where they can mix with pupils from urban as well as other rural schools.
- The curriculum plans a variety of cultural experiences from different traditions. For example, the recent project on 'journeys' led to pupils finding out about African and South American art and music and designing fabrics in the style of Coco Chanel. While the school celebrates Black History Month and provides other opportunities for pupils to celebrate the best of people's contributions to different cultures, these are sometimes not as broad or deep as they could be.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to extend their writing and record their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum in a variety of creative ways
- the curriculum builds on the existing work to broaden and deepen pupils' understanding of what is most outstanding about people's contributions to different cultures
- the governing body undertakes some self-evaluation to find ways that governance can become even more effective.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local

authority and spoke on the telephone to a representative of the Viscount Nelson Educational Trust. I met with pupils, and they shared their work with me. We visited all classrooms and looked at pupils' books. I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I considered 49 responses from parents to Parent View, and 42 free-text responses. I spoke to parents in the playground before school. I also considered 15 responses to the Ofsted survey for staff. During the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were on a visit to Holt and Sheringham.